

## Group seeks to get sales-tax hike for transportation on ballot

by **Glen Creno** - May. 7, 2008 12:00 AM  
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Supporters of a transportation-tax package filed language Tuesday for the November election, marking the kickoff of what is likely to be an intensive campaign to collect signatures needed to get the measure before voters.

Napolitano filed the paperwork to begin gathering the signatures to put the \$42.6 billion statewide transportation plan on the ballot.

The plan would be financed by a 1-cent increase in the state sales tax over 30 years. It would pay for a collection of freeways, trains, buses and local street upgrades.

The measure was created by a group called the TIME (Transportation & Infrastructure Moving AZ's Economy) Coalition and filed with the Secretary of State's office. Backers of the TIME Act have until July 3 to collect 153,365 valid signatures.

Napolitano released a statement saying she supports the initiative.

The push now will be on how to sell voters on the idea of increasing **taxes** during an economic slowdown. The state faces a \$1.9 billion budget deficit.

The state has said that dwindling transportation revenue will leave it with only enough money to maintain **Arizona** highways after 2015.

The tax would kick in on Jan. 1, 2010 and run for 30 years.

Some city officials voiced concerns about the plan at a recent meeting of the Maricopa Association of Governments. Some said it was the wrong time to go to voters or that the tax should be cut in half to make it more palatable.

Steve Voeller, president of the Arizona Free Enterprise Club, said his group was making final its position on the ballot measure. However, he said the group has concerns about the size of the tax increase, taking the sales tax from 5.6 cents to 6.6 cents. He called the current economy "fragile."

"That could have disastrous consequences on our economy," he said of the proposed tax increase.

But the state needs a new revenue source before transportation funding dries up, backers of the plan say. TIME believes increasing the sales tax is the best option.

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funded, including expansion of Interstates 40, 17, 10 and 8; commuter rail between Phoenix and Tucson; expanded light rail in the Valley; rapid-transit buses; and a street-car or rapid-bus system in Tucson.

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